**Theory-Based Problems in Early Childhood Education**

**CTEC 7270(6) – 3 credit hours**

**Auburn University – Fall 2017**

**Instructor:** Dr. Sean Durham, Assistant Professor, Curriculum and Teaching

**Office Location:** 5012 Haley Center  
**Office Hours:** Tuesdays, 1:30 pm – 3:30 and Wednesdays 3 pm – 5 pm; by appointment

**Phone:** (334) 844-8274

**Email:** [rsd0007@auburn.edu](mailto:rsd0007@auburn.edu)

**Course Description:**

In-depth exploration of a problem related to the thought, writings, and research that form the theoretical foundations of constructivist approaches to early childhood education.

With each iteration of this course, a “problem” in the field of early childhood education is explored from a theoretical basis with the goal being the generation of applications to practice that advances the field of teaching and the well being of human communities. Themes have included: the development of moral judgment, mind and causality, gender and cognition, and literacy development before schooling. This course will focus upon *the theoretical underpinnings* and long-term *implications* (outcomes) associated with *innovative practices* in early childhood education.

**Course Objectives:**

1. Construct a definition of theory and the role of theory in early childhood practice and its relationship to research.
2. Uncover and examine the theoretical foundations associated with several innovative programs and practices in early childhood education.
3. Compare and contrast theoretical perspectives, i.e., socio-historical theory of Vygotsky, constructivist theory of Piaget, and others to create discourse around educational practices. Defend arguments from multiple diverse theoretical perspectives.
4. Articulate the impact that certain early childhood problems and practices have upon multiple categories of outcomes, e.g., children’s development, society, family, economy.
5. Demonstrate ability to build a theoretical basis for diverse early childhood approaches through reviews of literature and construct a reasonable and sound methodology for further analysis of a problem or address a gap in the literature.
6. Identify effective methods of discourse among professionals in the field of early education and develop criteria for discourse (conversation, perspective taking, conflict resolution) that can be modeled in educational settings. Consider the role of schools in promoting civil discourse within society.
7. Practice planning and implementing strategies as an “architect of change.”

**Texts:**

Readings from:

DeVries, R., & Kohlberg, L. (1987). *Constructivist early education: Overview and comparison with other programs.* Washington, DC: NAEYC.

Hyson, M., & Tomlinson, H.B. (2014). *The early years matter: Education, care and the well-being of children, birth to 8*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Lewin-Benham, A. (2011). *Twelve best practices for early childhood education: Integrating Reggio and other inspired approaches*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Overton, W.F., Molenaar, P.C.M., & Lerner, R.M. (Eds.). (2015). *Handbook of child psychology and developmental science*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons.

Posner, G.J. (2004). *Analyzing the curriculum*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Washington, V., Gadson, B., & Amel, K.L. (2015). *The new early childhood professional: A step-by-step guide to overcoming Goliath*. New York: Teachers College Press.

There will also be additional readings on Canvas. I recommend you make copies of these

supplementary readings for annotation, study, and reference.

**Course Content:** To be discussed in class and identified through collaboration among participants in the course. The instructor will provide a schedule of discussion and readings following discussion about students’ interests surrounding the general theme of moral development.

**Course Requirements/Evaluation:**

1. All class members are responsible for all readings and should be prepared to discuss the material on the day it is due. With each reading, you should compose 3-5 carefully thought out discussion questions to propose to the class. You will need to turn in possible answers or considerations for discussion questions that include bulleted notes of reflections, posited answers, and/or references to readings. These discussion questions will provide structure for class discussions of the readings.
2. Produce an approximately 15-page paper (double-space, 12 point font, not including references) on a topic approved by the instructor. The paper will be a theoretical analysis and critique of a method of early education, a statement on the status of extant literature, and a description of proposed methodology for further research. Further instruction will be provided in class.
3. Formal book review. Students will choose from a reading list provided by the instructor and will provide a presentation and review of the book during class.
4. Using Washington, Gadson, and Amel’s actions of the “architect of change” identify a local problem/concern related to early childhood education and create an action plan for implementation. More information will be provided in class.